

Utility Program Beautifies La Jolla Skyline
Council President Scott Peters
For the La Jolla Light, January 2007

After four years of discussion between the City of San Diego and utility provider AT&T (formerly SBC), the completion of the City's utility undergrounding projects is assured. The California Public Utilities Commission recently approved AT&T's application for an undergrounding surcharge, which will cover the costs of burying their telephone and high-speed internet lines and allow remaining poles in some neighborhoods to be permanently removed.

Beginning in 1970, the City mandated that all power, telephone and cable lines would be buried underground, to rid neighborhoods of the unsightly tangle of lines and poles. Since that time, all new construction has included underground lines. The existing utility infrastructure in established neighborhoods has been slowly put underground.

In the late 1990's, the undergrounding program nearly ground to a halt as the City discontinued a mandatory surcharge for short-term political gain. In 2003, I was proud to vote with the City Council to expand the program and establish the goal of burying 30-35 miles of cable per year. The approval of AT&T's application will allow all lines to be buried simultaneously.

As of October 25, 2006 there were 35 underground conversion projects in construction across the city, covering more than 50 miles and including nearly 4,000 customers. Over the past two years, the undergrounding program experienced across-the-board increases in construction costs which caused delays in several new construction start dates. Next year, the City will hold a series of workshops with utilities and contractors to find ways to reduce costs and increase efficiency, with the goal of improving program speed and efficiency while reducing inconveniences to the public during construction.

We recently broke ground on an undergrounding project in the Barber Tract of La Jolla which will equip more than 350 homes with safe, reliable underground lines. There are a total of 24 projects scheduled for the First District over the next 20 years. To determine the schedule for your neighborhood, visit my website, www.sandiego.gov/cd1.

You may have seen a new face at La Jolla Community Planning Association, Town Council or Bird Rock Community Council meetings. I am happy to announce that Keely Sweeney has been hired as the Council Representative for La Jolla. Former La Jolla Representative Chanelle Hawken will now coordinate all Council agenda items affecting the First District. I am proud of the work Chanelle has done for La Jolla over the past year and a half.

Ms. Sweeney holds a Bachelor of Arts in Government and Spanish from Georgetown University and a J.D. from the University of San Diego. Her previous government

experience includes internships in Council District One and the City of San Diego Real Estate Assets Department. She also served as a Staff Assistant to Congressman Robert Menendez of New Jersey.

I am confident that Keely will continue in the strong tradition of exceptional service to the residents of La Jolla. I hope that our neighbors will welcome her warmly and turn to her with their concerns and ideas for the community.